

The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History
University of Arkansas
365 N. McIlroy Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-6829

This oral history interview is based on the memories and opinions of the subject being interviewed. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using this interview should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with

Randy Moss
Telephone Interview
9 February 2009

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. This is February—what day in February is this?

Randy Moss: This is the ninth.

JM: February the ninth, 2009. I'm preparing to do a telephone interview with Randy Moss. Randy Moss—M-O-S-S—is at his home in Prior Lake, Minnesota. And this is for the oral history on the *Arkansas Democrat* and [*Arkansas*] *Democrat-Gazette* for the Pryor Archives [The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History] at the University of Arkansas [at Fayetteville]. And briefly, before we really get started, Randy, tell me what you're doing now.

RM: I am a TV host for NFL Network in Los Angeles [California] for five or six months out of the year during football season and the rest of the time I am a horse-racing analyst for ESPN [Entertainment Sports News] and ABC [American Broadcasting Company] Sports.

JM: Okay, Randy, and as I recall, I don't know whether that was your start, but at one time you worked—early in your career you worked for the *Arkansas Gazette* and you were covering Oaklawn [Park Race Track in Hot Springs] doing the morning line, and eventually the *Arkansas Democrat* hired you away from them in what I consider maybe the first really big coup in the newspaper war [between the *Arkansas Democrat* and the *Arkansas Gazette*]. Is that correct?

RM: That's correct. I had actually started—if you want to call it—official work—I had started for the *Arkansas Gazette* back when I was in high school.

JM: Okay.

RM: There was an old fellow named Don Grisham, who is still around working in the Oaklawn publicity department . . .

JM: I remember him.

RM: . . . who used—yeah, used to write for the *Daily Racing Form*.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And he did the morning line for the *Gazette*. He was a family friend and he found out that I was interested in the horse races growing up in Hot Springs, and I started off basically doing clerical work for Don on an old manual typewriter typing up his morning line every day and Telecopying it to the *Gazette*. You remember that ol' [Xerox] Telecopier?

JM: Oh, yes. [Laughter]

RM: Six minutes per page.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And then I—that sort of morphed into where I was actually doing the picking for

the morning line under Don's name when I was in eleventh and twelfth grade and then in college at the University of Arkansas, where I actually met [longtime *Gazette* Sports Editor] Orville—Orville Henry . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . at the—in the [UA] Sports Information Office when his son, Butch, was the SID [sports information director] at Fayetteville.

JM: Right.

RM: I was in college. I was actually getting the entries for Oaklawn off of the Telecopier in the SID office and I happened to run into Orville. And he knew who I was already.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: When I left college I was in pharmacy school. I left college and Orville hired me full-time, and I worked for the *Gazette* from 1979 through 1984.

JM: Okay, Randy, we're at that point—let's just go back from the beginning, though.

RM: Sure.

JM: Where were you—where were you born and when?

RM: I was born and raised in Hot Springs.

JM: Okay. What year were you born?

RM: 1959.

JM: Okay, and you went to school all the—all the way through school at Hot Springs?

RM: Yeah, I went to Hot Springs High School . . .

JM: Hot Springs.

RM: . . . with Roger Clinton. [Laughs] [Editor's Note: Roger Clinton is former

President Bill Clinton's younger brother]

JM: Yeah, okay. [Laughter] All right. And what were your parents' names?

RM: Jim Moss, my father, and Suzy Moss, my mother. They were both horse racing fans. Of course, it was hard, really, to grow up in Hot Springs and not be a horse racing fan.

JM: Yeah. What did your dad do?

RM: My dad was a pharmacist for Walgreens for years and then he became a inspector for the Arkansas State Department of Health.

JM: Okay. So you—so you had actually [started]—so I guess you went to the races all the time, then.

RM: I went to the races [laughs] illegally for quite a while. I grew up in a neighborhood with horse trainers all around me.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: My next-door neighbor was the leading trainer in Oaklawn history, a guy name Bob Holthus.

JM: Yeah, I remember him.

RM: And—yeah, Bob's still training and training well. And Bob used to help sneak me into the racetrack at a very young age.

JM: Now, you had to be sixteen or something, didn't you, to—or eighteen—what was it to get into the track?

RM: You had to be sixteen to get into the track. I guess for my thirteenth birthday and I was thirteen going on ten.

JM: [Laughs]

RM: I was very small. And Bob met me in front of the race track April the seventh, 1972, and he was gonna get me into the races. Well, they were very strict. They had guards and—and they stopped anybody that looked like they were trying to sneak in. And Bob met me in front of the race track with this little man—introduced him to me as the chief of police—the Hot Springs chief of police and the guy took me around to the side entrance of Oaklawn and tried to walk me through and flashed a badge at the guard, and the guard stopped us and the guard said, “I’m sorry, you can’t take him in there. He’s obviously not sixteen.” And he said, “Well, I’m—I’m the chief of police and he’s coming in with me.” And the guard said, “No, he’s not. He’s not sixteen years old.” And the [laughs]—the chief of police, whose name was Joe Crain—I still remember his name, Joe Crain—looked at the guard and he said, “Sir, there’s been a crime committed. The suspect is inside the racetrack. This kid is the only witness. And if he doesn’t come in with me, you’re guilty of obstruction of justice.” [Laughter] And so the guard just looked at him and—“Go on in.” Just waived him on.

JM: [Laughs]

RM: Waived us on in. Years—years later—probably fifteen years ago, I’m walking through the racetrack and this little man—had to be ninety years old—stops me and says, “You don’t know who I am, do you?” And I said, “No, sir, I’m sorry I don’t.” And he said, “Does the name Joe Crain ring a bell?” And I said, “You son of a gun.” [Laughter]

JM: Yeah. How do you spell Crain?

RM: C-R-A-I-N.

JM: Oh, okay. [Laughs] That was wonderful. So were you able to get in pretty regularly after that?

RM: I—I devised ways to get in.

JM: Okay.

RM: But, yeah, I would get in pretty regularly from that point. Yeah.

JM: But you—so what all were you doing there? You weren't just watching the races, were you? You were hanging . . .

RM: Oh, yeah. I sat in Bob's box.

JM: Oh, did you?

RM: Yeah, he had a horse in the Arkansas Derby that very day. And I just sat in the box and made my \$2 "show" bets all day long. [Editor's Note: In horse racing parlance, a "show" bet is a bet that the horse will finish at least third]

JM: [Laughter] \$2 "show" bets.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

JM: That's—that's probably the safest way, but the semi-favorite—were you betting the semi-favorites or—or what?

RM: I—oh, probably so. Probably so.

JM: Yeah.

RM: I would give the money to my parents and my parents would make the bets for me.

JM: Yeah. But so you started keeping track of the races, though, and the morning line, I'm sure—the—the *Racing Form* and all that stuff?

RM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. My father taught me how to read the *Racing Form*. I was

doing pretty intricate handicapping back then—speed figures, they call 'em. Not many people were doing 'em back then and, yeah, I was helping Don with the handicapping for the morning line of the *Gazette*, and I was definitely into it.

JM: Yeah, and as I remember, Grisham is G-R-I-S-H-A-M. Is that correct?

RM: Yes, yes.

JM: Yeah, okay. And so speed figures as I understand it—it's speed rating of the horses. But as you say, they didn't used to do that, but it's—it's—that's really rating how much speed a horse has or shows. Is that correct?

RM: Sure. And it's mainstream nowadays, but back in the—back in the early- to mid-1970s, very few people were doing 'em around the country, and especially in Arkansas. And it's by far the most accurate way to handicap the horses and so, you know, I was doing it and I was putting the picks in the paper and, you know, they—people weren't used to that sort of handicapping, and it—people thought I was some sort of a genius back then, the way [laughs]—the way the—because people just weren't handicapping that way in this part of the country.

JM: Uh-huh, okay. And so you—you graduated from Hot Springs High School what year?

RM: Nineteen seventy-six. Went to college at the University of Arkansas for two years, during which I—I kept doing the morning line for the *Gazette* with Don during that period of time. We had sort of an elaborate system devised to where Don's secretary would call me in the morning for the picks and they would mail me copies of the *Racing Form* every day. And I would go to the SID's office every day to pick up the entries on the Telecopier.

JM: Uh-huh. So . . .

RM: And I did that for two years in Fayetteville and . . .

JM: That was still under Don's name?

RM: . . . still under Don's name.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: And I went to—I went to pharmacy school in Little Rock . . .

JM: Okay.

RM: . . . for one semester—one very miserable semester.

JM: [Laughs]

RM: And then after that—the next semester in the—in the—the spring semester I went to work for the *Gazette*.

JM: Yeah, okay. Why was it miserable?

RM: I didn't like—my—my father had been a pharmacist at Walgreens for years. He didn't like it, you know? I don't know how I wound up in pharmacy school, but .

..

JM: Probably because he was—yeah.

RM: The idea of seeing sick people all day long didn't—didn't really appeal to me, so I

...

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . didn't waste much time there.

JM: Yeah. Now, what—did you have any—how was your academic record in high school?

RM: It was good. I was in the [National] Honor Society.

JM: Were you? Okay.

RM: Yeah, I made—I made good grades in college and—but it just—pharmacy school just wasn't what I was cut out for.

JM: Okay, so Orville decided to hire you to—to—in 1979, and you were doing the morning line. But you were—you were also writing, right?

RM: Yes, I was writing. I was writing periodically.

JM: Yeah.

RM: He—he started off—well, see, what happened was that when I left college in—in the fall of 1978 and I was looking for work, Don Grisham, the wonderful man that he is, called Orville and said, “I know I've been doing the morning line for you guys for twenty years, but I'm gonna step aside. Randy now is out of college and he's actually been doing it for the last five or six years, as you know, and you need to hire Randy to do it instead of me.”

JM: Yeah.

RM: And so, you know, Don graciously gave it up and Orville called me and—and hired me to begin in the spring of 1979. And I'd—I spent the whole meeting just handicapping, basically. And on the last week of the meeting—Arkansas Derby week—Orville showed up. He'd been there once before, but he showed up on Arkansas Derby day, and I was sitting next to him in the press box. And he wanted me to file a sidebar.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: It would—it would be my first byline in the newspaper. And so I went down and did the interviews after the race and came upstairs to the press box and sat down

to file my story, and Orville put a sheet of paper in his typewriter and hammered out a paragraph and handed it to me and said, “Here’s your lead.” And I looked at the lead and, believe it or not, it was grammatically incorrect. [Laughter] And so I was—I was in a quandary. I didn’t know whether to say, “You know, Mr. Henry, you know, are you sure this is what you want? It’s a little—it’s somewhat redundant.” But wiser heads prevailed, I guess, and—and I swallowed my pride, and [laughs]—and I went ahead and filed it as he wrote it.

JM: Yeah, okay.

RM: But I don’t if he was testing me or what, but he was a—he was a wonderful guy and I loved working for him.

JM: This was a lead for your sidebar? Is that correct?

RM: The lead for my sidebar. The very first byline I had in the paper.

JM: Yeah. Yeah, okay. [Laughs] So . . .

RM: I still have a copy of that article. I still see it from time to time.

JM: Yeah. So then after that I—I assume that you gradually started writing more during the races.

RM: Yeah, yeah. That was the last day of the race meet in 1979. I moved to Little Rock and I shared an apartment with a fellow named Randy White, who was Governor Bill Clinton’s—I think he was his deputy press secretary.

JM: Yeah.

RM: I shared an apartment with Randy and I worked at the *Arkansas Gazette* from 3:00 [p.m.] to midnight every day. I did some stuff on the copy desk. Orville assigned me to one of his favorite beats, which was the amateur golf.

JM: Uh-huh. Oh, yes.

RM: Orville was, as you know, was quite a—was quite taken with golf.

JM: Oh, yeah, loved it.

RM: And Jim Bailey used to say that Orville, as good as he was at football, was an even better writer at golf.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: That he might've been the best golf writer in America. Well, he had a friend—a dear friend named [Charles E.] “Monk” Wade, who was the executive director of the Arkansas State Golf Association, and Orville introduced me to Monk, and I would—I spent the summer—my first summer with the *Gazette*—on a real tough assignment, hanging out at places like Pleasant Valley Country Club . . .

JM: [Laughs]

RM: . . . and the Country Club of Little Rock and traveling all over the state to cover Four-Balls [tournaments] and, you know, the Arkansas State Golf Association's amateur—you know, stroke-play events and things like that.

JM: Yeah.

RM: It was a—it was—it was quite the cushy assignment, and it led to people in the office calling me “Orville's fair-haired boy.”

JM: [Laughs]

RM: I also, whenever Orville needed a—a fresh pack of unfiltered Lucky Strikes . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . he would send me down to Main Street News to go get his cigarettes every day, and that sort of raised some eyebrows around the office as well. [Laughs]

JM: Well, I would've welcomed you there fifteen years or so earlier. [Laughter] I used to hate covering the Little Rock Country Club Four Ball. But the bad part about it was that in those days Orville wanted every flight. He wanted the pairings for every flight and then the results for every flight. [Laughs]

RM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah.

JM: And, you know—and the—boy, that's meticulous business, you know, hanging around getting all that, and the people at Little Rock Country Club Four Ball never were real eager—be in any big rush to get the pairings reading, though. They'd just sit around and dawdle and drink and everything else. I'd be there sweating the deadline [laughs] and waiting for them to get through making those pairings. But at any rate . . .

RM: And here we were out there covering a Four Ball where the guys were riding around getting drunk in golf carts.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And we were trying to write a serious story about it.

JM: Yeah.

RM: In hindsight, I think maybe Orville was trying to keep his contacts going at all these golf courses [laughs] around the state.

JM: Yeah, could've been. So when it was not Oaklawn time, though, you were just a regular sportswriter.

RM: I was a—oh, yeah, I was a regular sportswriter.

JM: Hmm.

RM: I did the golf beat in the summer. I worked on the desk. I did high school

football every Friday night in the in the fall.

JM: Yeah.

RM: I eventually went on the road and did some [University of Arkansas] Razorback sidebars.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And it was a—it was a wonderful place to work. I mean, there were—you talk about a—the quintessential sports department with characters.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: I mean, you're talking Jim Bailey, who was an icon even back then. People who worked in the sports department—and rightfully so—looked at Jim in a very reverential way. Wadie Moore, Kim Brazzell, Jake Sandlin, Mark Albright, Nancy Clark, Tom Strode and David Smith on the desk—you know, they were just . . . Joe Mosby doing the outdoors. Just a lot of very talented and very interesting people.

JM: And I guess James Thompson was there, too, wasn't he?

RM: James Thompson was the assistant sports editor.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: Definitely.

JM: Okay.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Okay, so then you come back and the next year when it got Oaklawn time though, you spent your time at Oaklawn. Is that right?

RM: Yes. I moved back into my parents' home for the Oaklawn meet—stayed in their

downstairs bedroom. And, you know, beginning with the 1980 season on, I wrote as well as handicapped for the entire meet.

JM: As I recall, and I—by that time I was in Oklahoma City [working for the *Daily Oklahoman*], but as I recall you were a very successful handicapper.

RM: Yeah, I—I was—and primarily for the reason that I mentioned earlier. I mean, doing the speed figures was something that really few if any other handicappers or bettors did in—in this part of the country. And . . .

RM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . and so, you know, people weren't accustomed to seeing, you know, those sorts of results in print, and I was successful at it.

JM: Yeah. You don't—you don't remember any rating—percentage of figures, though, on how many winners you picked or anything, do you?

RM: Well, I remember that for most of the time that I was handicapping for the *Gazette*, at the end of the season I would have a flat-bet profit.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: In other words, if you'd bet \$2 to win on every one of the horses that I picked you would've finished the season with a small profit, which is very unusual for a print handicapper, especially back then, because you had to have your picks in—there were—you know, there were—there were no computers or . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . it was just the very beginning of the computer age, and you had to have your picks in the morning before. Like, for a Friday morning for Saturday's races, because they had to set it in type, and it was a laborious process for the guys

downstairs in the shop, and so you had to Telecopy the picks in six minutes per page and do it the—do it the morning before. You know, toward the end—1983, 1984—they came up with these big Osborne computers for the first time.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: These things that weighed twenty-five to thirty pounds and you had to send things in blocks. That was toward the end, or 1983 or 1984 when I was with the *Gazette*. Orville used to hate those things. They used to—they used to terrorize him. But, yeah, that was the very beginning of the computer age.

JM: Yes. As I remember the story, he and Bailey were out at a football game at [Little Rock] War Memorial Stadium at night and he had a lot of trouble getting one of his blocks to go and everything, and finally—it was on a tape, right?

RM: Yeah, on a little cassette tape.

JM: And they—and finally put it in the thing and—and—and got it to go and they finally—finally Jim said, “Oh, I got it to go that time,” and Orville handed him the tape and said, “Throw that thing as far as you can,” and they threw it out of the press box. [Laughter] And the office called back and said, “We didn’t get that last tape.” [Laughter] So Jim had to go down through the [spectator] stands to find that tape. [Laughter] But—but—okay, so—so you stayed to—till 1984, and—and did you ever have any figures—? I know I used to hear them, about how many extra papers they sold during Oaklawn. Did you ever have any—remember any figures on that?

RM: No, I never really heard. They never told me any figures . . .

JM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: . . . or anything like that. I used to—I mean, really, the only sense I ever got was that the—the newsstands—the little newspaper racks . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . they would fill 'em up with papers and they would pretty much sell out of 'em.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And then there was a lady—there was a little drug store across the street from Oaklawn called Crawford Drug that was there for years and years, and they—they did quite a business selling racing forms. They'd open at 6:00 a.m. in the morning. And the lady who worked there—I can't remember her name, but she worked for thirty years—she said that every morning at 6:00 a.m. there would be a line outside the door. And when they opened the door they would go in and buy newspapers.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And she finally figured out they were tip-sheet people.

JM: Yeah. I'll be darn.

RM: People that would—they would—they would get the picks and—and would go print their tip sheets out on that. [Laughter] I always thought that was pretty funny.

JM: [Laughs] Yeah, I'll say. Okay. So—and in 1984 you switched from the *Gazette* from the *Democrat*. Is that correct?

RM: Yes.

JM: So can you tell me how that came about?

RM: Yeah, sure, that's pretty odd. I really—I'm a pretty loyal guy and I had no real desire to switch from the *Gazette* to the *Democrat*. It—and the newspaper war was already under way . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . pretty hot and heavy. And the *Democrat* had switched to a morning newspaper.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: The *Gazette* I knew from being in the office didn't really take the *Democrat* all that seriously at the time.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You know, they would get a copy of the *Democrat*. The very first edition that hit the street, they would have somebody outside the printer [pressroom] at the *Democrat*, and as soon as they put the first papers in the rack, they would take 'em and bring 'em back to the office and everyone would look at 'em and kind of make fun of all the typographical mistakes and the factual mistakes and the headline busts and things like that.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: So, you know, people at the *Gazette* back then looked at the *Democrat* pretty derisively and with a bit of bemusement. So I never really had any desire to work for the *Democrat*.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: But during that 1984 horse racing season, toward the end of the season in April, [Sports Editor] Wally Hall came up to me in the press box and started sort of half-

jokingly asking me when I was gonna come to work for the *Democrat*.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And finally about the third or fourth time he said something, I said, “Well, when are you gonna make me an offer?” And—and he said, “Well, I tell ya what, just put down on a sheet of paper what it would take for you to come to work for the *Democrat*.” So I—again, I had no real desire at the time to do it. I was making \$15,000 a year for the *Gazette*.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Back then in 1984. You know, nobody’s gonna get rich working in the newspaper business, so . . .

JM: [Laughs] True.

RM: So I—I decided to just sort of, you know, call their bluff and I doubled it. I put \$30,000 down on a sheet of paper and I handed it to Wally, and Wally took it—you know, didn’t say anything. The next day, which was Arkansas Derby day, last day of the racing season—he came up to me in the press box and he said, “You got a deal.”

JM: Gee.

RM: And I said, “You’re kidding.” And he said, “No, you got a deal.” And I said, “Well, I’m gonna need to call the *Gazette* and I’m gonna need to talk to the *Gazette* about it and, you know, I’ll get—” This was a Saturday. I said, “I’ll get back to you early next week.” So Orville was gone the first of next week, and so I needed to talk to somebody. This was before cell phones, so I didn’t—I couldn’t reach Orville. So I called Carrick Patterson [son of owner Hugh Patterson and

editor at the *Gazette*] and I told Carrick what the situation was, and that the *Democrat* had made me a pretty generous offer, and he said, “I’ll get Orville. I know where Orville is. I’ll get Orville and I’ll call you back.” So Carrick called me back a little later in the afternoon and said he had reached Orville on the phone, and Orville advised him not to match the offer. And, you know, he said, “We’d like you to stay at the *Gazette*. I would be very disappointed if you went to the *Democrat*. I always thought if you left the *Gazette* it would be for someplace like the *Daily Racing Form* or something like that. I never really thought you’d, you know, sink to the level of going to the *Democrat*.”

JM: [Laughs]

RM: “But, you know, I can’t stop you from going.”

JM: Yeah.

RM: So I called Wally back and told him I would take the job.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Years later . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . I would see Orville in press boxes—Razorback games, primarily, and he wouldn’t speak to me for the longest time. And I want to say it was about 1988, maybe, and we were in the press box at Texas Stadium covering an Arkansas-SMU [Southern Methodist University] game, and I was in the food line in the press box, and suddenly behind me I hear somebody making a horse whinny sound. And I turned around and Orville’s standing right behind me with this big grin on his face. [Laughter]

JM: Yeah.

RM: And, you know, we started talking again at that point, and it wasn't until years later that I found out what exactly had happened. Orville told me. He was playing golf at Augusta [Georgia] National [Golf Club] . . .

JM: Huh.

RM: . . . with Jack Stephens. And you can imagine—I mean, it's very difficult to be able to play a round of golf at Augusta National . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . that is something that very few people get to do, and Orville got to do it every year—one round every year with Jack prior to the Masters [golf tournament].

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: He was on the course and Carrick Patterson called him off the course. And Orville was furious at being called off the course for any reason. And he got to the phone and he found out that Carrick wanted to talk to him about some horseracing handicapper kid making \$15,000 [laughs] a year, and Orville said he was so angry at being pulled off the golf course at Augusta National, he just said, "Let him go. Let him go."

JM: Yeah.

RM: And hung up the phone and went back out to the—went back out [laughs] and joined his—joined his foursome again.

JM: That sounds a little bit like Orville. [Laughter] Yeah, yeah, oh, boy. So [laughs] yeah, he did love golf. And I guess Jack was maybe president—I don't know whether he was president of Augusta then or not, but he was—he was a big

honcho down there, you know, and he later became president of Augusta National. But—so how long were you with the *Democrat*?

RM: I was with the *Democrat* from 1984 until I went to work for *The Dallas* [Texas] *Morning News* in 1989.

JM: Yeah, okay.

RM: I still remember the first day I came to work at the *Democrat*. I had only known the *Arkansas Gazette* newsroom . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . which was a very modern, attractive—technologically advanced for its day—you know, newspaper room. Very—very professional atmosphere and a wonderful place to go to work each day. I went to the *Democrat* for the very first day and it was in a—what, a former YMCA [Young Men’s Christian Association] building with drains in the floor—dirty, overcrowded. Sports department was kinda pushed off into the corner.

JM: Yeah.

RM: They showed me where my desk was and said, you know, “Here’s your typewriter.” It was just a manual electric typewriter, where I was accustomed to working on a, you know, modern computer screen at the *Gazette*.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And when I wrote my first column you had to take it over to this scanner and . . .

JM: Oh, yeah.

RM: . . . scan the typewritten paper through and correct the multitudes of mistakes, and I felt like I was gonna cry that first day I was at the *Democrat*. I thought to

myself, “What in the hell have I done?”

JM: Yeah. [Laughs]

RM: But, you know, they treated me wonderfully.

JM: Yeah.

RM: They did. [then-*Democrat* general manager] Paul Smith—I didn’t really have much of an interaction with [*Democrat* publisher] Mr. [Walter] Hussman, [Jr.], but through Paul Smith, Mr. Hussman was very nice to me and very generous, and they pretty much let me, you know, cover the races at Oaklawn, cover the races at Louisiana Downs. I would move to Shreveport [Louisiana]—Bossier City every summer, and I would cover the races at Louisiana Downs. Come back and, you know, help do Razorback football and occasionally high school football in the fall.

JM: Yeah.

RM: They were—they treated me—they treated me very, very well there.

JM: Yeah, yeah. And, let’s see, I guess—was David Vance at Louisiana Downs then?

RM: David Vance was at Louisiana Downs. David Vance, Cory Johnson . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: Mr. DeBartalo—Edward J. DeBartalo, who—also owned the [San Francisco] 49ers [National Football League team] and was the owner of the race track at Louisiana down there. [Editor’s Note: Real estate tycoon Edward DeBartalo, Sr., developed Louisiana Downs in 1974. He purchased the 49ers in 1977 and gave the team to his son and business partner, Edward DeBartalo, Jr.]

JM: Yeah, yeah. I remember him. He also—I think he—he owned Remington Park,

too, didn't he?

RM: He did. Yes, he did.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: In Oklahoma City. Right.

JM: Yeah, right. I interviewed him a—a couple or three times and everything and, boy, that was always a [laughs] tough interview, but . . .

RM: Yeah.

JM: He spoke so low, you know, and you just—almost impossible to hear him. But at any rate—I know that the *Democrat*, from having worked there—they kept very close track on how many extra papers were sold at—at Oaklawn. Did you ever hear any figures from them on how they were doing?

RM: They never—they never told me.

JM: Yeah.

RM: They never told me exactly how many papers they were selling. They began doing some pretty innovative things. For example, to compete with the tip-sheet people who at that time at Oaklawn were allowed to stand on the sidewalk right outside the front entrance of the racetrack and peddle their tip sheets very loudly and very colorfully. To compete with those tip-sheet sellers, they would have—they would hire young people to stand out and put 'em in *Arkansas Democrat* T-shirts and they would have—they would have stacks of sports sections—only sports sections.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Not the full newspaper, but just the sports section part of it, and they were selling

the sports sections for—I don't know if it was fifty cents or a dollar a pop or whatever. But they were—you know, they were undercutting what the tip-sheet people were selling their sheets for.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And they had two or three of these kids at each entrance that were selling tip sheets. Or were selling, you know, newspaper sports sections.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: So that was something that had never been done before, and they were—I remember they told me at one point that they had—they began—they would send extra trucks to Hot Springs during the racing season with extra papers to put in the racks. They would add newspaper racks for the racing season. They would advertise on the side of the city buses and bus-stop benches and things like that. As I mentioned and as you know, the newspaper war was going pretty hot and heavy at the time, and the *Gazette* had begun to advertise the Oaklawn handicapping and advertised me and put me in, you know, half-page house ads and things of this sort. And I remember one of the very first things I did when I came over to the *Democrat* in 1984—they hustled me over to a TV studio and taped a TV commercial, in which they gave me a script and everything, and I basically was, you know, saying on the TV commercial that I essentially, “Saw the light and switched from the *Gazette* to the *Democrat*, and you should, too.”

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And you can imagine as someone who, you know, was given his very first newspaper job by Orville Henry and still felt a great deal of affection for the

Gazette, it made me very uncomfortable.

JM: Yeah.

RM: It made me feel like a traitor, sort of. It was bad enough, you know, to go from the *Gazette* to the *Democrat*, but then to sort of be asked to rub salt in the wound—in—in the wound, if—if there indeed was a wound, but . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: It was sort of like, you know, they wanted me to thumb my nose at the *Gazette* while I was—while I was walking out the door. But, I mean, in the end I did it. I mean, I guess I had to have some allegiance to the people that were now paying my salary . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . and probably wouldn't have gone over very well in my first week on the job if I had refused to do the . . .

JM: . . . “No, I’m not gonna do it.”

RM: . . . TV commercial. Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Exactly. So I did it and I’ve always felt a little bit of remorse over it, but that was that.

JM: Yeah. Okay, so—so you stayed at—you stayed at the *Democrat*. And, course you were there at the *Democrat* when they had the [antitrust] trial in 1986 [when the *Gazette* sued the *Democrat*], and—and then when the *Gazette* sold—when the Pattersons [the owners of the *Gazette*] sold out to Gannett and then you . . .

RM: Yes.

JM: Then you stayed, I guess, three years into the Gannett operation at the *Gazette*.
What was happening with the two papers then that you remember? Or do you remember anything that stands out in your memory of how things were going?

RM: I remember that at the *Democrat* you could get a definite sense of the tide turning.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You would—you know, you would see the improvement in the product of the paper.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You would see every day about how the *Democrat* would—you know, would be giving a much bigger news hole than the *Gazette*.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And would initially try to beat the *Gazette* on volume of news, and then eventually the quality of the news began getting better and better.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You—you know, you would see the—the regular TV commercials where the *Democrat* would be trumpeting their gains on the *Gazette*. You know, every six months it seemed like a new commercial would come out to, you know, where the—the *Democrat* was getting closer and closer to the *Gazette* on Sunday sales and weekday circulation and things like that. And, you know, there was a definite sense at the *Democrat* that this thing was winnable.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And at the same time, when you went on the road when you covered an event and you were there with the people from the *Gazette*, especially since I knew those

people pretty well, you could also get a sense of—I don't want to say panic.

Panic might be a little bit of a harsh word, but you could see that the attitude of the *Gazette* toward the *Democrat* had completely done a 180 [degree reversal] since I had been at the *Gazette*.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You know, whereas they used to look at the *Democrat* as sort of like entertainment—comic relief—now they realized that this was a serious deal. And then when Gannett bought the paper, whereas initially it seemed like it gave the *Gazette* staffers a real shot in the arm . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . it didn't take long for you to see that the attitude of the long-time *Gazette* people was pretty disheartened.

JM: Yeah. They didn't like . . .

RM: That's when you kind of realized that the *Democrat* would—could very likely win that thing.

JM: Uh-huh. They didn't like the type of newspaper that Gannett was trying to put out—the—the—the old-time *Gazette* people.

RM: No, they didn't like the type of newspaper Gannett was trying to put out. They didn't like the managers that Gannett sent in to run the paper. And some of the decisions they were making. They didn't necessarily like the way they were treated by some of those managers. They just sensed that their—you know, that their world had sort of turned upside down.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And I think Orville was one of those people. Orville became very disheartened with the way that the newspaper was being operated at the time.

JM: Uh-huh. Had he already left? Before you left the *Gazette* in 1984, had he already moved to Fayetteville full-time?

RM: I—I don't know for sure. I don't recall. I don't think so. I don't remember being at the *Gazette* when Orville was gone. But I might be mistaken. [Editor's Note: Henry ended his forty-seven year career with the *Gazette* when he went to the *Democrat* in August 1989]

JM: Yeah, I know at some point—I don't remember for sure, you know—he kept asking them for more space and help to compete and they kept turning him down, so finally he just told Hugh [Patterson] he just wanted to go to Fayetteville.

RM: Yeah.

JM: And so—and—and so they let him go. But they did—you were speaking about space—they also—early 1980s the *Democrat* had a lot more space in its sports section than the *Gazette* did, didn't it?

RM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. You know, when you wrote something for the *Democrat*, you very seldom had to worry about [your story] getting cut.

JM: Yeah, yeah. [Laughter] They—they might say, "Give me ten more inches," huh? [Laughter]

RM: Exactly. I mean, you could call up and say, "Hey, you know, I need twenty-five inches instead of fifteen."

JM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: You very seldom had an issue with it, so that . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, the amount of space in the sports section at—at times seemed to dwarf what the *Gazette* offered, and I—to their credit, I think the *Democrat* realized that sports was a real sales tool.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: And that—whereas, there was no way they could match the experience of an Orville Henry or a Jim Bailey . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . that what they could do that the *Gazette* couldn't do was just, you know, run everything they could get their hands on.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And, you know, that's what they did.

JM: They covered everything and ran everything off the wire that they could [laughs] fill it up with.

RM: Exactly.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Exactly.

JM: And tons of stuff, yeah. So let's see, in 1989, you switched to *The Dallas Morning News*. Is that correct?

RM: Correct.

JM: How did that come about?

RM: I—I learned through a—through a colleague that the *Morning News* had an opening in the sports department to cover horse racing, and for the first time in

my life I actually applied for a job, and I called the sports editor, Dave Smith, the legendary sports editor . . .

JM: Yeah, I—I know Dave. I—I met him a few times.

RM: Yeah, he was a—he was a incredible talent at that particular position, both administratively and, you know, just from the standpoint of knowing sports. But Dave, you know, flew me into Dallas and hired me.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: That was in—I want to say it was in the summer or maybe the spring of 1989.

JM: Okay, for a significant raise in this case, too?

RM: Not a significant raise. No, no.

JM: Yeah.

RM: It was about a—I want to say maybe a—oh, 30 percent raise. Something like that.

JM: Wasn't . . .

RM: I—I guess that's significant, but . . .

JM: Yeah, it wasn't double. [Laughs]

RM: No, it wasn't double.

JM: Yeah, okay. Was there any particular reason you were wanting to switch down there?

RM: Not really. I've never been a tremendously ambitious person, but the—at that time *The Dallas Morning News* was, if not the best sports section in America, it was on a very short list.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Dave Smith had that reputation wherever he went. I mean, he demanded a big

budget for the sports department.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: He got it, and he would transform those sports departments into national forces. I mean, he did it in Fort Lauderdale [Florida]; he did it at *The Boston* [Massachusetts] *Globe*; and he did it at *The Dallas Morning News*. They had an—and incredibly talented sports department.

JM: Yeah, yeah, he was at Washington [D. C.], too, for a while, wasn't he?

RM: He was in *The Washington Times*, I think.

JM: Yeah, it was *Star* or *Times*.

RM: And . . .

JM: I don't remember which, but . . .

RM: Yeah, and he made it—I mean, it—it—you knew that when you went to work at *The Dallas Morning News* for that sports department at that time for Dave Smith that it was a very good career move. It turned out to be the right move.

JM: Yeah, who was—who were his sports columnists then?

RM: Forrest “Blackie” Sherrod . . .

JM: Yeah, that's what I thought. Okay.

RM: . . . who was a huge horse racing fan.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And who I'd already gotten to know a little bit when I covered the Kentucky Derby every year. Blackie Sherrod. Randy Galloway . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . who's now with the *Star Telegram*—the *Fort Worth* [Texas] *Star-Telegram*.

Randy Galloway was the other lead columnist. Tim Cowlshaw was a columnist there at the time.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Now he's their head columnist.

JM: I hired Tim.

RM: Did you really?

JM: Yeah, I hired him first from, I think, Corpus Christi [Texas] to go to work at the *Daily Oklahoman* in Oklahoma City, and he left there and went to *The Dallas Morning News*.

RM: Okay. Well, you had Kevin Sherrington, who was a very, very talented writer.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Barry Horn, who was their media writer then and now. He's still with *The Dallas Morning News*. He's a . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . very talented writer.

JM: Yeah. Ish Haley wasn't there then, was he?

RM: No, he wasn't there then.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Ed Werder covered the [Dallas] Cowboys [National Football League team] beat and he's now—he now covers the Cowboys beat and other NFL items for ESPN.

JM: Yeah.

RM: So I get a chance to come across Ed periodically, especially my work with the NFL Network. They had a—they had a—quite a lineup back then.

JM: Yeah, and they—and I'm trying to think of the guy's name that came from the *Los Angeles Times* and I think went to the *Morning News* and then the [*Dallas Times Herald*] hired him away from 'em, and he was a columnist. There had got to be the big bidding war down there over hiring these columnists, and then I think that's the point when the *Dallas Morning News* went to the *Times Herald* [laughs] and hired Blackie.

RM: Ah. Skip Bayless, is the guy you were . . . ?

JM: That's him. That's who I . . .

RM: Yeah.

JM: That's who I'm talking about. Skip Bayless.

RM: Yeah, Skip was—now he's with ESPN as well. But, yeah . . .

JM: Is . . . ?

RM: . . . Skip was the subject of a bidding war.

JM: Yeah, that—that—that was Skip. Skip I think had gone to the—left the *L. A. Times* and gone to *The Dallas Morning News* and was, you know, getting pretty popular. And, of course, the big newspaper war going on there, and the *Times Herald* hired him away from the *Morning News* and gave him a big salary, I think, and so I don't know whether that may have irked [laughter] Blackie. But the *Morning News* went out then and hired Blackie, and I thought they were both terrific, but—but Blackie was the [laughs] most entertaining columnist, so—but at any rate. So you got there about the time there was another war going on, right, between the—between the *Morning News* and the *Times Herald*.

RM: Yeah, but I think by the time I got there, I think the *Times Herald* may already

have closed.

JM: Had it? I didn't think it closed till about 1990—1990 or 1991, but that's . . .

RM: You may be right, but . . .

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Okay, Randy, this is side two of this tape. This is Jerry McConnell here with Randy Moss. We were discussing the war between the *Times Herald* and *The Dallas Morning News* after you went to the *Morning News* in 1989. You said basically by then you thought the war was over or just about over. Is that correct?

RM: Yeah, I don't recall much consternation at *The Dallas Morning News* back then about—about the *Times Herald*. [Laughs]

JM: Yeah. [Laughs] Let me—let me ask you one question. As I recall—this is just a little bit hazy and everything, but I guess back when you first went to work for the *Gazette*, Oaklawn may have been the only track in this part of the country or—at any rate, it was the big deal, and they were—were they still having those huge crowds on [Arkansas] Derby day and everything then?

RM: Oh, yeah.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact, the years that I was covering Oaklawn were really the heyday of the track.

JM: Yeah.

RM: At the time Oaklawn would run in the—in the late winter and early spring. The only race tracks that were operating during that period of time in this part of the country were to the south, the Fair Grounds [Race Course] in . . .

JM: The Fair Grounds in New Orleans [Louisiana]. Right.

RM: . . . in New Orleans. To the west, you'd have to go all the way to a minor racetrack in New Mexico. To the north, you'd have to go all the way to Chicago [Illinois]. And to the east, I guess you would have to go old Latonia [Race Course, now Turfway Park] in Kentucky, and then to Miami in the southeast.

JM: Yeah.

RM: So there was a huge radius in this—in the middle part of America . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . in which there were no racetracks that were in operation.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And—and even it—just [as] importantly, there was no such thing back then as simulcasting.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: So if you wanted to make a bet on the horse races, you had to go to the track in order to make a bet. And you didn't have riverboat casinos back then.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You didn't have Indian [Native American] casinos.

JM: Uh-huh. So the . . .

RM: You had Las Vegas [Nevada].

JM: Yeah.

RM: I'm not even sure you had Atlantic City [New Jersey] back then, but maybe you had the very beginning of the Atlantic City casinos.

JM: You . . .

RM: Other than that, if you wanted to make a bet you either played the lottery in states that had the lotteries or you played horse racing.

JM: And as I remember, that Oaklawn got a—at that time that was the only game in town as far as horse racing or gambling that was going on. They got to where they were drawing up around 70,000 for Derby day.

RM: Oh, yeah, they had, you know, 50,000, 60,000, 70,000 people . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . on Arkansas Derby day. And they were—you know, like you said, they were the—they were the only game in town. And in later years simulcasting came into vogue, and so Remington Park in Oklahoma City . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Louisiana Downs in Shreveport.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: A little place called Trinity Meadows [Race Track] in Dallas.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: In Fort Worth, actually. You know, these tracks would all be open during the Oaklawn season to take bets by simulcast.

JM: Yeah.

RM: So people started going to those tracks when they wanted to play Oaklawn races instead of driving all the way to Hot Springs and having to pay for a hotel room and—and things like that. Then, of course, the casinos at Tunica [Mississippi] and . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . at Shreveport came on line, and that made for even more competition for Oaklawn.

JM: Yeah.

RM: During those days—during the—the mid-1980s, Oaklawn was the most successful track in America, really, in terms of attendance.

JM: Uh-huh. Okay, but so how—so how long did you stay at *The Dallas Morning News*?

RM: I stayed at *The Dallas Morning News* from 1989 until 1995.

JM: Okay. And then what happened? Kind of walk me through your career since then.

RM: [In] 1995 I went to work for Oaklawn Park as—as their director of operations. I came back home to Hot Springs and worked for them in management. I only did that for a year and a half, and then I went back to the newspaper business in—with the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* in 1996 and stayed there until ESPN hired me in 1999.

JM: Okay. What did ESPN hire you to do?

RM: ESPN hired me to be their horse racing analyst for their televised racing.

JM: Yeah, and they—and they—and this—this included all the big races and everything. Is that correct?

RM: Yeah, yeah.

JM: The Triple Crown and the other stuff. And so I've seen you on some of the TV telecasts doing an analysis and everything. So you're still . . .

RM: Back in—back in—I remember when I first went to work for *The Dallas Morning*

News back in 1989, shortly after that I got a nice card from Orville inviting me to come to his house in Fayetteville and have lunch one day the—the—the next time I was in the area, and so about six months later or so I did. I went up and had a wonderful lunch with Orville and Ann.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Kind of—yeah, I would read him periodically after that in the *Democrat-Gazette*, but didn't really have too much contact with Orville, unfortunately . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . until 1996, when I married my wife, Kathie—K-A-T-H-I-E. We had a shower in Hot Springs . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . and—a wedding shower, and as a surprise to me, Orville and Ann were there.

JM: Hmm.

RM: They had made the drive from Fayetteville down to Hot Springs . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . and came to my wedding shower, and I was very touched by that, and I had a nice chance to catch up with Orville on that night. Spent a lot of time talking to him that night, and it turned out to be the last time I ever saw him.

JM: Yeah. Hmm. Yeah. Yeah, I worked for him for sixteen years, so . . .

RM: Yeah.

JM: But at any rate, so you—when did you go to work for the NFL Network?

RM: I went to work for the NFL Network in September.

JM: Just this past September?

RM: Just this—just this past September.

JM: So you . . .

RM: I work four—I work four days a week in Los Angeles. I commuted from Los Angeles back home.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Went to Thursday night football games for the NFL Network, and I was the host of a show called *Teen Cam* that they created.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And it was a—it was very interesting. It's—and it's—it's—it's kind of funny. I thought about Orville more than a few times . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . because back when I worked at the *Gazette*, Orville used to tell me on a regular basis, “You gotta get out of horse racing.”

JM: Hmm.

RM: Every horse racing writer I've ever known became a compulsive gambler and died broke.” That's what Orville would tell me.

JM: Yeah. [Laughs]

RM: “And you gotta get out of that business. It's—it's a business for losers. What you need to do is cover football.”

JM: Yeah.

RM: “That needs to be your future. You need to cover football and you need to get out of this horse racing. That's where the money is. That's where your future should be is football. Remember what I'm telling you.”

JM: Yeah.

RM: And, of course—yeah, he would tell me that when I asked him if I could go to Louisiana Downs for the summer, and he would always turn me down and he was looking out for me and he would—yeah, he thought that was the wrong career move for me.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Well, it turned out, as luck would have it for me—I'm a very lucky guy—it turned out to be the right career move for me to follow horse racing, but now . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . now all these years later, I've gone to work for the NFL Network doing football as well, and I've often thought about Orville's advice.

JM: Yeah. Well, unless you—did you become a compulsive gambler?

RM: No. [Laughs]

JM: Yeah, okay.

RM: Not at all.

JM: You—you probably—well, and you understood the odds and everything well enough to know that [laughter] there wasn't—that's a bit—I always figured that was a tough way to make a living.

RM: I'm too cheap to become a compulsive gambler.

JM: Yeah, okay. [Laughter] Yeah, okay. Well, was your wife from Hot Springs?

RM: My wife is from Minnesota.

JM: Oh, she is. Okay.

RM: Yeah, she's from—in fact, she's from Prior Lake . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . is where she grew—is where she grew up . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . is really where she—now, where she graduated from high school at least.

And she had always told me—we've been married for thirteen years now, and she'd always told me that at some point if it was okay with me, she'd like to move back to Minnesota to be with her family. And . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . when I took the job at the NFL Network and had to travel to Los Angeles four days a week, it was a perfect opportunity for her to be up here, since it didn't matter where I lived.

JM: Yeah, yeah, okay.

RM: As long as they had an airport.

JM: Yeah. [Laughs]

RM: And so we moved here in November.

JM: How do you like Minnesota?

RM: It's cold.

JM: Yes, it is. [Laughter] I have a friend that lives here in Greenwood, Arkansas, married to my cousin, but he's from northern Minnesota. And—and . . .

RM: Oh.

JM: . . . well, he just gets—he just frets all the time—it gets—he said, “Damn, this hot weather down here, it's just, you know, it's just wearing me out. I wish I was back in Minnesota right now.” [Laughs]

RM: Oh, I tell people the story of the night that I took a red-eye [a late night or overnight flight] from Los Angeles back to Minnesota in December, and when I left Los Angeles at 10:30 at night it was seventy-seven degrees [Fahrenheit]. And when I landed and got off the plane in Minneapolis at 5:00 a.m. the next morning, it was minus twenty-five.

JM: Oh, yeah. Oh, no.

RM: I had a 102-degree change in temperature from Los Angeles to Minnesota.

[Laughter]

JM: I hope—I hope you were dressed for it.

RM: [Laughs]

JM: No, no, that's a—there was one guy that—whether you ever knew him—there was a guy that worked at the *Gazette* for a while named Jerry Dhonau, who had left there and went to the Minneapolis paper—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*—is that it?

RM: Yes.

JM: Yeah, and he stayed three years and said he just loved the paper, but he said, “I couldn't stand the cold there.” He said, “It was just—it was just so fierce, you know, and I wasn't used to it.” So he came back, but . . .

RM: One of the things I enjoy about living up here is being able to read the *Star Tribune*. It's a—unfortunately it just went into bankruptcy protection.

JM: Oh, did it really?

RM: Yeah, it's having the same problems that so many other newspapers across America are having.

JM: Yeah.

RM: But it is a very, very good newspaper, and it was a nice change from Tulsa [Oklahoma], where I lived before.

JM: Yeah. I noticed your cell phone number was from—the area code is from the Tulsa area, nine-one-eight.

RM: Yes, I lived for ten years in Tulsa and . . .

JM: Did you?

RM: . . . and, you know, out of a sense of duty I took the *Tulsa World* every day.

JM: Yeah.

RM: The *Tulsa World* was not exactly my idea of a fine newspaper. The *Star Tribune* is an outstanding paper, and I think the *Democrat-Gazette* is a very good newspaper as well. I mean, you would—you would be able to judge things like that more than me, but . . .

JM: Yeah, I think so. I think they've done remarkably well in—in—in keeping up their news hole and—and, you know, and—and a lot of coverage and, you know, pretty good coverage of—of most things. So—so that's a—did you ever have any direct dealings with John Robert Starr when you were at the *Democrat*?

RM: Yes, a few. I was not a fan.

JM: Yeah, okay. [Laughs]

RM: It was pretty difficult back then to work in the *Democrat* newsroom as crowded as it was and not have any direct dealings with John Robert Starr.

JM: Yeah.

RM: He was a very loud, boisterous kind of guy.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And I used to be entertained by a lot of the things he wrote. But the day that he wrote in the paper that Orville Henry became sports editor of the *Gazette* when all the good men were away at war—that's when he lost me. I felt that was not only inaccurate, but an incredibly vicious thing to say.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And I thought that John Robert Starr was on many occasions unnecessarily mean-spirited.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Especially when it pertained to Orville. And, you know, as someone who was a lifelong Orville Henry fan, I wrote John Robert Starr off after that.

JM: Yeah. You didn't have any direct dealings with Walter, did you, when—when they were hiring you or anything, but . . . ?

RM: No, it was all through Wally Hall and . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . Paul Smith who was the general manager . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . at the time. He may still be. I don't know, but . . .

JM: Well, he's been promoted to president now.

RM: Okay.

JM: He's a—he's . . .

RM: You know, Paul was a—Paul was a—a—very kind, but, you know, very, very businesslike guy.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And I had dealings mainly with Paul once I got to work for the *Democrat*.

JM: Yeah.

RM: I met Walter a couple of times, but never anything more than just a very—you know, very brief, “How are you doing” sort of thing.

JM: Uh-huh. Okay. So it didn’t come as a surprise to you at the end, at least the last few years that the *Democrat* won the war.

RM: No.

JM: Yeah.

RM: No, it—after seeing the tide turn so dramatically toward the tail end of my employment with the *Democrat*. I—you know, I followed the newspaper war with great interest when I was working at *The Dallas Morning News*.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You know, I saw the television coverage sometimes—national coverage of the—of the war and, you know, articles like, you know, in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* and places like that. And, you know, it came as no surprise to me that Gannett failed.

JM: Okay, Randy, anything else you can think of that we haven’t covered in this interview?

RM: Probably not, Jerry. It was a—you know, it—it—it was a fun time in my life . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . working for Orville and—and working in the *Gazette* newsroom and, you know, getting to work around all those people.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: You know, laughing with all those people—hearing the Jim Bailey stories. He had . . .

JM: Yeah. [Laughs]

RM: . . . he had a story about Orville that I still remember to this day. He had a lot of stories about Orville . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . and about everybody else, but Jim used to like to tell the story of the day that—of the Sunday that Orville was back in the office during football season and he was working on his—on his Monday morning follow-up that would jump [to another page] two or three times . . .

JM: Yeah. [Laughs]

RM: . . . if you remember. And he was feverishly working at his desk, and his phone rang, and he sort of looked over at his phone two or three times with a—a—a bit irritated that nobody else had answered the phone. Well, everybody else was already on the phone answering calls and so Orville had no option but to pick up the phone. And as soon as he picked up the phone, he launched into a huge smoker's cough and, you know, Orville was smoking pretty heavily in those days.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Those unfiltered Lucky Strikes.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And to hear Jim tell the story, Orville had the phone to his mouth and was—was in the middle of this—this horrible hacking, grotesque smoker's cough for about .

. .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . fifteen or twenty seconds straight.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And then he pulled the phone away from his mouth and looked at it and hung it up without [laughs] saying a word. [Laughter] And Bailey used to say that the poor guy thought he'd gotten the emphysema award.

JM: Yeah. [Laughter] That's probably true. Okay. Yeah, I still talk to Bailey every now and then. Probably at least once a month we'll talk by phone or something and sometimes more often than that, but . . .

RM: I used to occasionally be on the receiving end of his dictation.

JM: Yeah.

RM: His—his phone calls from the road, you know?

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Again, this was back before computers were really in vogue.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: Way before—or at least, you know, five years or so before the [Tandy] Radio Shacks [portable computers] made it easy to file stories from the road, but . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . you know, Bailey is a master of many things, but he was particularly adept at organizing stories in his mind . . .

JM: Correct.

RM: . . . and dictating them over the phone for these—these football games that he had

just seen and had made some notes on. And he would dictate these long stories and, you know, sometimes he would be toward the end of the story and he'd say, "Hey, wait a second. Go back to the fourth [para]graph when I said this. Make it this instead."

JM: Yeah.

RM: And it was remarkable . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . the way he could organize a story in his mind . . .

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: . . . and then verbalize it . . .

JM: Uh-huh. Yeah.

RM: . . . and then it would come out as a masterpiece.

JM: Yeah, and just off the top of his head . . .

RM: Exactly.

JM: . . . he organized 'em just like he'd been sitting at his typewriter for three hours or something like that.

RM: Exactly.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Just off the top of his head.

JM: Yeah.

RM: And, you know, we all used to try to emulate that as best we could when we were on the road. And there was another day when Kim Brazzell was filing a story [on] an AIC [Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference] football game, and I was a

very fast typer. That was one of the things I've always been blessed with is the ability to type at a pretty high rate of speed. So I was sort of like the—oftentimes the guy chosen to take dictation.

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: And I was taking Kim's dictation, and Kim had a pretty long story about, you know, [Head Football Coach Ralph] "Sporty" Carpenter and Henderson [State University]. I think they were playing Ouachita [Baptist University].

JM: Uh-huh.

RM: It was a big game. And he got to the end of the story and I pressed the button to file it and I pressed the erase button instead of the send button.

JM: Okay. [Laughter]

RM: And I had to tell Kim that—that I—that I had—that his story had completely vanished and it was my fault.

JM: [Laughs] He had to do it again, huh?

RM: He had to do it again.

JM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. He wasn't very happy about that one.

JM: Yeah, okay. [Laughs] Well, Randy, I really appreciate it. I've really enjoyed this interview. You filled me in on a lot of things. As I say, you know, that I, of course, had worked at the *Gazette* for sixteen years and then had gone back to the *Democrat* and was there from 1971 until 1978. But I had just gone to the *Daily Oklahoman* and *Oklahoma City Times*—still in operation then when you started with the *Gazette*. So this has really filled me in on an important time and—and I

think that was a significant development in the newspaper war at that time.

RM: Well, it was one of the—I was probably—you know, I don't know how significant it was.

JM: Yeah.

RM: But I was one of the first people, I guess, to make the jump from the *Gazette* to the *Democrat*, and maybe at the time just because of the advertising that they gave horse racing . . .

JM: Yeah.

RM: . . . was part of that newspaper war. I was one of the most high profile . . .

JM: Yeah, you were. That is . . .

RM: Yes.

JM: That's correct. That's the way I would assess it. And later on, course, Orville went and John Brummett went and—but . . .

RM: Yeah.

JM: But you were the first one. So at any rate, I'm sorry I didn't get this done a long time ago, but—but . . .

RM: Oh . . .

JM: . . . boy, I'm glad we got it done now.

RM: All right, Jerry. Thanks for including me.

JM: Yeah, okay. Thanks a lot, Randy.

RM: Take care.

JM: Uh-huh. Bye.

[End of Interview]

[Edited by Pryor Center staff]